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AUTHOR	Farkas, Steve; Johnson, Jean
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ABSTRACT

This booklet reports on the results of in-depth telephone surveys of 800 black parents and 800 white parents who were questioned about their children's education. Also included is information from focus groups and individual interviews with parents and public education professionals. Public Agenda plans eventually to conduct similar surveys of other groups of minority parents. The first highlighted finding is that black parents focus on academic achievement as the most important goal for public schools. Integration is still highly valued, but academic achievement is the number one interest of black parents. A second major finding is that African-American parents are firmly committed to promoting diversity in schools, but they voice serious doubts about some policies intended to promote diversity or address racial differences. The focus of African-American parents on academic achievement, a third finding indicates, reflects a deep anxiety about how their children fare in the nation's schools. White parents agree that African-American students attend poorer schools, but they tend to see this as a problem limited to urban areas, and not as the crisis black parents believe in. The views of white parents on race and the public schools are complex and often ambivalent. They are proud that their children's educational experiences are more diverse than their own, but they often fear that an influx of African-American students into a school would bring academic and social problems. Most say that it is not the students' race, but the socioeconomic status of the students that concerns them, and they are deeply uncomfortable admitting what troubles them. Most parents want integration to occur naturally, but are wary of associated costs. African-American and White parents are agreed in their visions of what it will take to educate students successfully, and they share a great deal of common ground about educational improvement. An attachment discusses study

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methodology, and two appendixes discuss interviewer effects and list experts interviewed. (Contains 13 charts and 4 tables.) (SLD)

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